

Shaping Nebraska Law: The History of the NSBA's Legislative Program

by Timothy G. Hruza and William J. Mueller

For over a century, the Nebraska State Bar Association has recognized the essential role that lawyers play in shaping the laws that govern their clients, their practices, and the broader legal system. As articulated in its Legislative Program and Policy Statement, the NSBA's legislative efforts are designed "to keep its members informed of changes to the law and shall include the initiation, support, opposition, or monitoring... of legislative matters before the Nebraska Legislature, the Congress of the United States, or the Federal or State Executive Departments with the intent of improving the quality of legal services to the public and promoting the purposes of the Association."¹

These purposes include enhancing the administration of justice, upholding high standards of professional conduct and public service, and advancing legal education and law reform. The NSBA's Legislative Program is not only a reflection of its mission but also a vital mechanism for ensuring that Nebraska's legal framework evolves in a thoughtful, informed,

and effective manner. Guided by these principles, the NSBA—through its House of Delegates, Executive Council, Legislation Committee, practice sections, legislative counsel, and individual members—actively engages in the legislative process by proposing new laws and responding to proposed statutory changes.

In a typical legislative session, the NSBA prioritizes and advocates between eight to 15 legislative initiatives. Additionally, it reviews approximately 125 to 150 bills that may impact the legal profession. These bills span a wide range of practice areas, including criminal law, civil procedure, real estate, probate and trust, veterans' law, and family law. The House of Delegates establishes formal positions on 20 to 30 bills and provides technical feedback on up to 25 more. Many other bills are monitored to ensure that practitioners remain informed about potential legal developments and can anticipate changes that may affect their clients and practices.



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Celebrating 125 Years
HELPING LAWYERS HELP PEOPLE
1900-2025

THE HISTORY OF THE NSBA'S LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM

Over the years, the NSBA has played a pivotal role in advancing significant legislative measures, including:

- The creation of the Nebraska Court of Appeals through a voter-approved constitutional amendment in 1990;
- The addition of seven district court judges, two county court judges, and six juvenile court judges since 1990;
- The establishment of the Judicial Resources Commission in 1992 to assess the efficiency and needs of the judiciary;
- The formation of the Commission on Public Advocacy in 1995 to support counties in providing effective legal representation to indigent criminal defendants;



Historic photo of the NSBA Legislation Committee.

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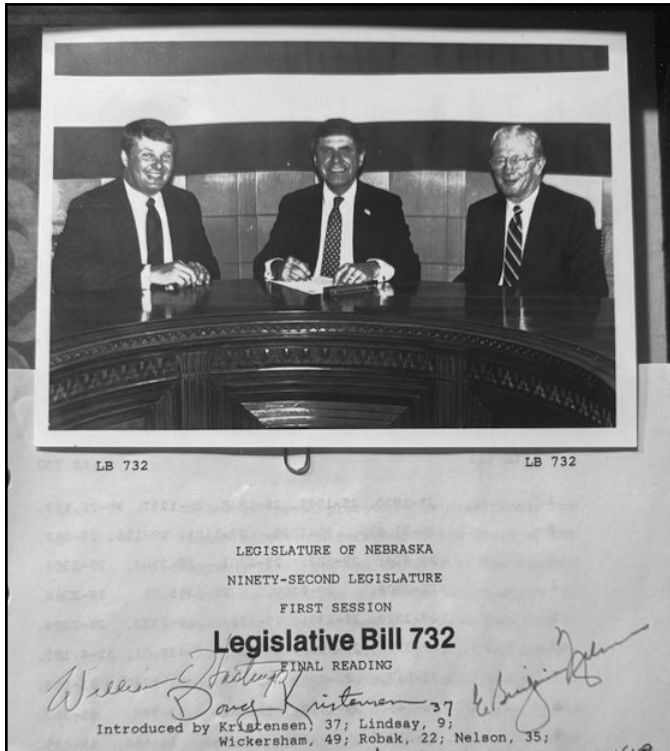
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L-R: Speaker of the Legislature Douglas A. Kristensen, Governor E. Benjamin Nelson, Nebraska Supreme Court Chief Justice William C. Hastings at the Final Reading of Legislative Bill 732 in 1991.

- The adoption and modernization of the Uniform Probate and Trust Code;
- The enactment of the Model Business Corporation Act, Limited Liability Company statutes, and updates to civil and criminal practice and procedure laws.

As professionals uniquely positioned to understand and interpret the law, attorneys are vital contributors to the development and refinement of Nebraska’s legal system. The NSBA’s legislative program serves the public and policymakers by ensuring that the legal community has a voice in shaping the laws that affect all Nebraskans. This engagement not only strengthens the legal profession but also enhances the quality and accessibility of justice across the state.

As the NSBA celebrates its 125th anniversary, it is an opportune moment to consider the profound impact that lawyers have had on the evolution of Nebraska law. The contributions of the NSBA’s sections, Legislation Committee, Executive Council, and House of Delegates have been instrumental in this progress. We extend our sincere gratitude to the Sustaining Members of the NSBA for their financial support of the Legislative Program and to the engaged attorneys who dedicate their time and expertise to the Association’s legislative and policy initiatives. Their commitment ensures that the voice of the legal profession continues to be heard. 

Endnote

¹ NSBA Legislative Program & Policy Statement, adopted April 4, 2014.



Members of the NSBA Legislative Committee in 2023.